United Nations A/67/636

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 December 2012

Original: English

Sixty-seventh session
Agenda item 130
Programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013

Standards of accommodation for air travel

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the standards of accommodation for air travel (A/67/356). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information and clarification.

2. The Secretary-General's report provides information on standards of accommodation for air travel for the two-year period ended 30 June 2012 and comparative statistics for the two-year period ended 30 June 2010, in addition to trend analyses for the past 10 years. The report details the first-class travel of delegates and of the President of the General Assembly, as well as exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel authorized by the Secretary-General.

3. With respect to the United Nations and its affiliated entities, the Secretary-General indicates that 529 exceptions were authorized during the period from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012 at an additional cost of $1,268,934, while during the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2010 334 exceptions were authorized at an additional cost of $841,920 (see A/67/356, tables 1 and 2).

4. Upon enquiry as to what percentage of the regular and peacekeeping budgets was spent on air travel in the previous two bienniums and how much of that travel expenditure related to exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel, the Advisory Committee was informed that current accounting systems do not provide a detailed breakdown of all travel expenditures by type. The Committee was instead provided with the table below showing travel expenditures solely for United Nations Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters (Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office at Nairobi, and United Nations Office at Vienna).

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Travel expenditures for United Nations Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters (Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office at Nairobi, and United Nations Office at Vienna): 2008-2009 and 2010-2011

(United States dollars)

Budget	*Ticket cost*	*Non-ticket cost*	*Total travel cost*
2008-2009			
Regular	101 229 136	75 722 626	176 951 762
Peacekeeping	49 452 998	18 221 388	67 674 386
Subtotal	**150 682 134**	**93 944 014**	**244 626 148**
2010-2011			
Regular	107 466 997	74 712 006	182 179 003
Peacekeeping	41 512 997	11 290 515	52 803 512
Subtotal	**148 979 994**	**86 002 521**	**234 982 515**
Total	**299 662 128**	**179 946 535**	**479 608 663**

5. The Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry of the procedures by which requests for exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel are evaluated. **The Committee notes the rigorous evaluation process conducted in relation to exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel for medical reasons, including a review by the Medical Services Division prior to the recommendation by the Medical Director, and acknowledges the importance of such exceptions. The Committee emphasizes the need to respect the independence of the role of the Medical Services Division in reviewing requests for exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel for medical reasons.**

6. In paragraph 13 of the report, it states that the number of trips and the additional cost of exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General have increased steadily. The Advisory Committee notes, from the supplementary information provided to it, that an increase both in the number of exceptions and the cost of exceptions was first reported in 1998 (see annex).

7. **While it acknowledges that the general cost of commercial air travel has increased over the years, the Advisory Committee is nonetheless concerned about the increasing cost of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel, recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to conduct an analysis of trends regarding the exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel and their impact on the additional cost of travel and further requests that he take action to limit the increased use of such exceptions.**

8. **In light of the increasing number of exceptions granted, the Advisory Committee also recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that the rules and procedures concerning the evaluation of**

requests for exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel are adhered to. In this regard, the Committee intends to continue to scrutinize the future use of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel by the Secretary-General.

9. The Advisory Committee notes from table 1 of the report that, from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012, 153 trips were undertaken by individuals in the "prominent traveller" category, at an additional cost of $280,258. **The Committee stresses the importance of ensuring that all applicable procedures are followed in assessing such requests for exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to review the use of this category of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel, as part of the analysis referred to in paragraph 7 above.**

10. Upon enquiry as to the number of trips booked one day before the travel date, the Advisory Committee was informed that six such trips were booked during the period under review. Furthermore, the Committee notes from the supplementary information provided to it that several trips were booked two to three days before the travel date. **The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to make every effort to reduce short-notice travel plans and to ensure trips are booked as much in advance of the travel date as possible. In this regard, the Committee recalls its recommendations regarding the advance purchase of tickets in its previous report on the proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (see A/66/739, paras. 12-14). The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to monitor this situation closely.**

11. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Secretary-General.**

Annex

Comparative data on exceptions for air travel: 1992-2012

(In United States dollars)

		Change from previous period			*Annual changes*	
Period July-June	*Total No. of exceptions*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Additional cost of exceptions*	*Cost*	*Percentage*
1992-1994	239	(43)	(15)	249 247	(58 726)	(19)
1994-1996	203	(36)	(15)	203 273	(45 974)	(18)
1996-1998	103	(100)	(49)	136 140	(67 133)	(33)
1998-2000	160	57	55	256 947	120 807	89
2000-2002	161	1	1	320 791	63 844	25
2002-2004	236	75	47	442 472	121 681	38
2004-2006	217	(19)	(8)	451 930	9 458	2
2006-2008	243	26	12	537 654	85 724	19
2008-2010	334	91	37	841 920	304 266	57
2010-2012	529	195	58	1 268 934	427 014	51